



## Bloggers Roundtable Articles

### Army Develops New Tool for Future Leaders

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WASHINGTON, April 22, 2008 – The Army is preparing to launch a new mandatory program that will help foster leadership for active-duty soldiers E-6 and above, Department of Army civilians and the service's reserve components, a U.S. Army official said.

The Multi-Source Assessment and Feedback, or MSAF, program is designed to provide individual feedback to leaders under the eight core Army competencies, Army Col. Bruce Reider, director of the Center for Army Leadership at the Combined Arms Center, Fort Leavenworth, Kan., told online journalists and "bloggers" in a conference call yesterday.

The core competencies, he explained, provide a clear and consistent way of conveying expectations for Army leaders and are applied across all levels of organization, leadership positions and careers.

"This program has the potential to fundamentally change the culture of the Army," Reider said.

Similar Army programs in the past have been voluntary, this one will be mandatory, the colonel said. It's expected to be initially operational after May 1, and to be fully capable around Oct. 1, he added.

"Up until now we have relied entirely on the formal feedback from our superiors or our raters," Reider said. "Now you have an opportunity not tied to performance evaluations to receive feedback from other individuals to shape your behavior to become a more agile and adaptive leader."

Reider added that MSAF also will produce leaders who are more aware of their strengths and weaknesses in terms of the Army's eight competencies for leaders. Confidential feedback may come from any combination of peers, subordinates, and superiors.

"We believe that the types of leaders required to be successful are those leaders who are agile and adaptive. We think ... the purpose of MSAF is to enhance an individual's self-awareness," Reider said.

The program was piloted during 14 Combat Training Center unit rotations between 2004 and 2006, Reider said.

"In the pilot program, we had over 2,000 leaders that actually received assessments and over 23,000 individuals that participated in the program to provide those assessments," he said. "The results that we got were around 98 percent of the individuals [who] participated in this program, felt that it was valuable and worthwhile program."

Reider said the impact on units should be minimal. The MSAF program is Web-based, and most individual assessments can be completed in less than 12 minutes.

"Once an individual receives an assessment, they will receive a personalized individual feedback report with the results of their assessment. Those feedback reports will be maintained electronically, ... only accessible by the individual," said Reider.

He added that the individuals have the capability to add personalized individual developmental plans to use a strategy to modify their behavior.

"The assessments will all be anonymous, the individual receiving the assessments will not know necessarily who is providing the feedback due to the number of people required to provide feedback," Reider said. "This program is only for developmental purposes; it is not to evaluate performance and will not provide any input to our performance evaluation system."

Reider added that once leaders receive their feedback assessments, they will have access to a coaching feature.

"We will have a pool of virtual coaches available telephonically or electronically through e-mail, and we will also use the faculty and cadre at our schools to provide coaching for our students when they come for a professional military education course or civilian educational course," Reider said. "There is [also] a self-coaching capability for those individuals who don't want to share their information or don't need much assistance in interpreting their results or creating their plan."

The MSAF program applies to all domains of training and education: self-development, institutional and operational. Individuals may participate for self-development purposes at any time, using the MSAF at on their own initiative for self-development purposes, the colonel said.

"An individual is going to get an assessment through this program about every three to four years throughout their career," said Reider. "We think that is enough time to adjust behavior if they chose to do so, but it is not too frequently to become a burden."

While leaders will have access to only their own confidential assessments, commanders may be provided with a trend analysis identifying strengths and weaknesses related to leadership competencies in their organizations, Reider said, adding that this provides valuable feedback for unit leader development programs.

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